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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

SUB-COMMISSION ON PREVENTION OF DISCRIMINATION AND PROTECTION OF MINORITIES

Forty-eighth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 11th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 13 August 1996, at 4 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. EIDE

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The meeting was called to order at 4.10 p.m.

ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

(a) MEASURES TO COMBAT RACISM AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AND THE ROLE OF THE SUB-COMMISSION (agenda item 5) (continued) (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1996/5 and 8; E/CN.4/1996/71 and Add.1 and E/CN.4/1996/72 and Add.1)

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FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

(a) SITUATION OF MIGRANT WORKERS AND MEMBERS OF THEIR FAMILIES

(b) POPULATION DISPLACEMENTS

(c) RIGHT TO LEAVE ANY COUNTRY, INCLUDING ONE'S OWN, AND TO RETURN TO ONE'S OWN COUNTRY (agenda item 18) (continued) (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1996/29)

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION OF THEMATIC ISSUES RELATING TO RACISM, XENOPHOBIA, MINORITIES AND MIGRANT WORKERS (agenda item 20) (continued) (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1996/30)

1. Mr. ALI KHAN, speaking on agenda item 18, said that despite the adoption of resolutions related to the agenda item by the General Assembly and the Commission on Human Rights, the problem of ethnic cleansing had reached such alarming proportions in some parts of the world, notably in Asia and the subcontinent, that the Sub-Commission must take urgent action, together with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other specialized agencies, to safeguard the principles of ethnic, religious and cultural diversity.

2. On the question of the citizenship of migratory populations, from a legal and practical point of view, a group was bound to be associated with the territory on which it lived. Yet in some regions, families of third-generation and even fourth-generation migrants still had no rights of any kind. One way to protect their interests that had been suggested was to enlarge the field of human rights so that they came within its scope. He suggested that another way, since they were denied rights of citizenship, would be to grant them domiciliary rights and the right to return home. He cited the British Nationality Act of 1948 as an example of legislation which recognized the rights of people who had lived in a territory for a certain length of time. Although there were political considerations to bear in mind, UNHCR, as an operational agency, needed some firm legal guidelines on which to base its interventions.

3. Ms. McDOUGALL, speaking on agenda items 5, 17 and 20, said that the struggle to eradicate racism in South Africa had not been completed, but had simply entered a new stage. While the new Parliament and Cabinet were dismantling the constitutional structures and legal framework of apartheid, the basic construct of the apartheid society, namely, profound economic and social inequalities, remained. Apartheid was more accurately described as a

system of economic exploitation based on racial discrimination, and the core of apartheid would persist unless the new Government could find the resources to create a level of economic and social equity.

4. She believed that the critical issue to be examined with reference to racial discrimination was its intersection with the denial or violation of other fundamental human rights. It was also important to consider the potential for racially disparate impact of apparently neutral laws, governmental policies, and public or private practices. In her view, racism and ethnic discrimination, along with gender, were cross-cutting issues that should be examined with respect to each item on the Sub-Commission's agenda.

5. Ms. MOYA (American Association of Jurists), speaking on agenda item 17, said that the invaluable and inestimable contribution made by the 200 million people of African descent living on the American continent to the wealth, culture and progress of the local and national societies in which they lived continued to be disregarded and downgraded. Relations within those class-ridden and racist societies which denied benefits and opportunities to people of African descent were characterized by rejection, contempt, xenophobia, dependence and superiority or inferiority complexes. More than merely tolerance and respect for difference were needed to protect the social, environmental, political and economic rights of those people. Communities needed to have more control over their own lives and truly intercultural relationships had to be nurtured in order to ensure a more equitable distribution of technological and financial resources. That implied not only tolerance, but also an acceptance of those who were different.

6. Throughout virtually the entire American continent, the mechanisms of exclusion were increasing: in education, their lack of participation meant that Blacks were stigmatized in order to safeguard long-standing privileges; they had fewer opportunities and fundamental rights; in the legal system, there was a lack of political will to establish, defend and apply instruments, to punish discrimination and protect Black workers' rights; the media and society at large, were producing sexual stereotypes and perceptions that led to discrimination in the workplace; in countries like Colombia, Brazil and the United States of America, Blacks were being equated with criminals; and rural areas occupied by Black communities were treated by Governments as if they were uninhabited, as in the case of the planned interocean link canal in Colombia.

7. She called on the United Nations to carry out a study of Black communities on the American continent, not only to lead to an improvement in the understanding of the problems involved but also to better inter-group relations as well as better living conditions for Black people. It would also be helpful if a voluntary fund could be set up to allow representatives of the Black communities in America to attend and participate in the sessions of bodies such as the Working Group on Minorities.

8. Ms. NEURY (Centre Europe - Tiers Monde), speaking on agenda items 5 and 20, said that her organization deeply regretted the Sub-Commission's decision to group together agenda items 5, 17, 18 and 20, as it left little time for serious consideration of the issues.

9. On the question of migrant workers, she said that experience showed there was less paranoia about them in places where they had long been settled; familiarity allowed them to be seen first and foremost as neighbours and colleagues rather than as foreigners. Governments should avoid making laws which discriminated against migrant workers, and town planning should take into account social, economic and cultural factors so that genuine integration policies could be implemented.

10. Certain powerful political, economic and religious groups had found it easy to manipulate the so-called specificity of some groups, sometimes with tragic consequences. Immigration laws often opened the way for the expression of xenophobia and racism. She cited the view of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance that immigration laws in Europe, far from stemming the tide of immigration, had only continued to marginalize many foreigners. The responsibility of States was clear; generally, a State's willingness to combat racism and xenophobia was reflected in the laws it passed. She therefore wondered how the international community could put real pressure on Governments that enacted racist laws when they were signatories to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which considered such action an offence.

11. Her organization requested the Commission and Sub-Commission to allow the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance to carry on with his work, in a spirit of independence, in the context of the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination. She referred to the distinction drawn by the Special Rapporteur between racism as institutionalized government policy, such as apartheid, and a racism that adopted various guises and whose effects were seen in groups or social classes that tended to hold racist or xenophobic views often hidden behind high-sounding principles of equality. The second kind of racism was the form most common in the Western countries as well as the most dangerous, in so far as those countries continued to enact discriminatory laws while ratifying international conventions at variance with their national legislation.

12. Mr. WAREHAM (International Association against Torture), speaking on agenda item 5, commended both the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance on his independent, critical and objective work and the Sub-Commission on having initiated the process that led to the establishment of his office.

13. The Special Rapporteur had visited the United States of America in 1994. His report (E/CN.4/1995/78/Add.1) had met with a response from the member State that virtually amounted to a personal attack. Such a reaction to a report which, despite certain shortcomings, presented an objective picture of the situation in the United States, demonstrated the importance of ensuring that sufficient resources were available to maintain the Special Rapporteur's independence and the quality of his work and bolstered the demand for the appointment of a country-specific rapporteur.

14. The United States had criticized the Special Rapporteur for focusing on the situation of African Americans to the exclusion of other "minorities" but

the Government had done nothing to publicize his visit among minority communities or to make transportation available to representatives of community-based NGOs that were not located in the four cities to which his budget had confined him. Moreover, if the United States was unable to address the situation of the 40 million African Americans, it stood little chance of resolving any other racial situation.

15. The United States had criticized the Special Rapporteur for his "alarmist" description of a rising tide of racial hatred and violence in the country. But the International Association against Torture had revealed the existence of racist death squads within the New York City Police Department and had received reports that the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) officers conducting the inquiry into the recent arson attacks on Black churches in the south had been investigating church members and leaders rather than focusing on white supremacists.

16. His organization advocated the convening of a world conference on racism in 1998, the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

17. Ms. PARKER (Humanitarian Law Project/International Educational Development, Inc.), speaking on agenda item 18, said it was regrettable that the Special Rapporteur on the human rights dimensions of population transfer, including the implantation of settlers and settlements, had been unable to prepare his final report because financial constraints had prevented the holding of a prior multidisciplinary seminar. Her organization strongly supported the idea of a seminar since it would ensure that the conclusions and final recommendations of the report reflected a wide cross-section of opinion on essential points. Certain Governments that were in breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 were understandably troubled by the prospect of a seminar or report. Any State that had returned refugees from Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Liberia or any other country at war was in breach of article 45, and article 49 prohibited the wartime implantation of settlers and settlements or the removal of local inhabitants from occupied areas. China had been guilty of such practices in Tibet, Sri Lanka in Tamil areas, Indonesia in East Timor and Myanmar in the territories of ethnic nationalities.

18. The 1974 Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict and Protocols I and II Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 condemned forcible evictions and destruction of civilian dwellings in the course of military operations or in occupied territories.

19. She drew attention to the plight of 200,000 Tamils in Sri Lanka who had recently fled to the jungle from the heavy aerial bombardment of the Kilinochchi area. Her organization urged the Sub-Commission to call on the international community to press for a cease-fire in Sri Lanka and the establishment of conditions for a return to negotiations to end the conflict.

20. Ms. GRAF (International League for the Rights and Liberation of Peoples), speaking first on agenda item 17, said that her organization was especially concerned by the fate of minorities that did not reside within established and recognized State structures, for example in occupied territories.

21. Referring to the Greek Cypriots in the northern part of Cyprus and the enclaved group in Karpas in particular, she said that Turkey's failure to comply with the 1975 Third Vienna Agreement, which had established a framework for relations between the Greek Cypriot minority and the Turkish occupying authority, had perpetuated ethnic animosity. The resulting exodus of Greek Cypriots from the north had reduced the community to fewer than 500 people. To date none of the measures provided for in annex IV to Commission on Human Rights document E/CN.4/1996/54, such as freedom of movement between north and south for Greek Cypriots and Maronites, free circulation in the north of publications from the south and the upkeep of places of education and worship, had been implemented. The enclaved Greek Cypriot minority of Karpas was subjected to particularly harsh restrictions and its increasing isolation jeopardized the continued existence of the community.

22. The Turkish Cypriot minority was also being eroded by emigration and replaced by Turkish settlers. Attempts to express dissatisfaction were harshly repressed, trade unions had been banned and several outspoken journalists had been murdered.

23. The Turkish presence in Cyprus could not be deemed legitimate when the question of minority rights was at stake. The impasse would not be resolved until Turkey removed its forces from the north and dialogue between the Greek and Turkish Cypriots was begun. The basis of peaceful coexistence within a federal structure must be forged through the consent and participation of representatives of the two communities.

24. Turning to agenda item 18 (b), she urged the Sub-Commission to ensure that the Special Rapporteur's final report was completed as soon as possible. It should pay particular attention to the relationship between population transfer and the breakdown of the economic, social and cultural structure of the affected communities and should focus on Tibet and Myanmar, where forced relocations had led to a high level of social breakdown, malnutrition and disease.

25. Mr. AHMAD (World Muslim Congress), speaking on agenda item 17, joined other speakers and respected human rights activists such as Yelena Bonner and Sergei Kovalev in condemning the violent onslaught on the people of Chechnya. His organization was also concerned about the persecution of the people of Kosovo.

26. The Muslims of the Arakan region of Myanmar, the target of forcible eviction and persecution by the Government, had fled to refugee camps in Bangladesh, where some 60,000 were currently living under extremely harsh conditions. Their tragic plight deserved urgent consideration by the Sub-Commission.

27. In many societies, democracy was interpreted to mean the rule of the majority in the interest of the majority. Minorities had to submit to the will of the majority community. In India, the ancient caste system had caused immense suffering to the minority community known as the "untouchables", from which a large proportion of the country's bonded labour and child labour was drawn.

28. The discrimination against Muslims was as old as India's existence as an independent State. All economic and social development was withheld from them and they had been pushed down to the bottom of social and economic life. Symbols of their culture and identity remained under attack and their loyalty was always suspect. From time to time they fell victims to organized and systematic communal violence, after which the Indian Government habitually issued denials and took steps to prevent an impartial investigation.

29. The representation of Muslims in the national and provincial legislatures was far inferior to their population ratio. They were refused loans to start businesses, and serious hurdles were placed to deter their attempts to obtain higher education. Entry into Government service was practically barred to them.

30. Muslims were victimized by India's communal police and security services. Their schools for religious education were harassed, and the undertaking to rebuild the demolished Babri Mosque had never been intended to be implemented. Muslims constituted a disproportionately high percentage of persons arrested under the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act.

31. Gradually Muslims were being reduced to the status of second-class citizens. They were informed that if ever the people of Jammu and Kashmir succeeded in obtaining their right to self-determination, the Indian Muslims would be made to "pay for it". Nevertheless, India wanted to be labelled the world's "biggest democracy", and therefore be placed beyond scrutiny. The cancellation of the planned visit to India of the Special Rapporteur monitoring the implementation of the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination based on Religion or Belief was significant in that respect. The rehabilitation of the rights of Indian Muslims and other unrepresented minorities could be achieved only by empowering them to play an effective role in the governance of their country. For that purpose they must be able to send genuine representatives to the country's legislatures in proportion to their numerical strength. Constant international monitoring came next.

32. Mr. SLUIJK (International Federation for the Protection of the Rights for Ethnic, Religious, Linguistic and Other Minorities) said that terrorism was not committed exclusively by fanatical groups, but also by Governments. The Kurdish minority in Turkey, for example, had been intimidated and terrorized for more than a decade by the Turkish Government. Moreover, in 1974 the Turkish army had invaded Cyprus and had transferred over 80,000 Turkish citizens from Anatolia in order to change its demographic composition. Even the Turkish Cypriots were treated as second-class citizens by the Turkish occupying forces.

33. Another example of the violation of the rights of minorities was the treatment of the Greek minority in Albania, although the deprivation of the political rights of all Albanian citizens under President Sali was equally an cause of concern. In recent hearings before the International Relations Committee of the United States Congress, the recent elections in Albania had been characterized as "flawed" and security force beatings, prolonged pre-trial detention, poor prison conditions, occasional restrictions on freedom of speech, and discrimination and violence against women had also been

denounced. A former Albanian Deputy Prime Minister had stated that the Judiciary had been placed under the complete control of the Executive. The Government refused to return scores of churches belonging to Greek communities, as well as the most valuable monasteries, icons and other religious property and it had declared 21 "houses of prayer" to be part of the country's architectural heritage and had transferred them to the Ministry of Culture. It had been reported that Greeks were unable to obtain employment in the police force or the public service and there was a lack of public protection for their property. Greek schools and businesses had been burnt to the ground and their churches were desecrated by thugs. The authorities made no effort to arrest and prosecute the perpetrators, even when fatalities occurred. The Government had cleansed ethnic Greeks from all appointed positions of power. The police sometimes even joined in acts of harassment and extortion against the Greek minority, strengthening the belief that the violence inflicted on it was part of a government plan to force ethnic Greeks to move south into Greece.

34. The Government was severely restricting the ability of ethnic Greek children to obtain an education in their mother tongue by closing down Greek-language schools in violation of international norms for the treatment of minorities. Such action could even be described as a subtle form of ethnic cleansing and disregarded obligations entered into by the Albanian Government and the ruling of the Permanent Court of International Justice that Albania could not withdraw rights it had previously granted to the Greek minority.

35. The time had come for the United Nations to take decisive action against all violators of minority rights. If the Governments of Turkey and Albania wished to be part of the civilized world, they had an obligation to respect and promote the rights of their people, especially the rights of minorities.

36. Mr. DIENG (International Commission of Jurists - ICJ) noted that on 4 March 1996 Israel had imposed a siege on the Palestinian areas in the West Bank and Gaza. Since 1993 the inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza Strip had been living under serious restrictions on movement, which had been increased following the suicide bomb attacks on Israeli targets earlier in 1996. The closure denied Palestinians access to occupied East Jerusalem and in practice separated the north of the West Bank from the south in violation of the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement.

37. Israel claimed that the restrictive measures were taken to prevent further attacks, but their drastic and wide-ranging impact could only be seen as a form of collective punishment directed against the civilian population as a whole. They were also discriminatory, since Israeli citizens continued to enjoy freedom of movement.

38. According to information provided by Palestinian and Israeli human rights groups, army roadblocks had caused the deaths of at least four Palestinian adults and five infants. The closure and restriction of movement had practically paralysed the health sector of the Palestinian community, while the immediate effect was that 70,000 Palestinian workers had lost their jobs in Israel. Between March and August, the Israeli Government had allowed a few thousand workers to return to their jobs, leaving the rest idle with no viable source of income. Moreover, since the Palestinian industrial sector depended

heavily on Israeli supplies of raw material, machinery and fuel, the siege of the territories had produced a severe interruption of activity. The agricultural and fisheries sectors had also suffered tremendously. Education had been severely disrupted because students and teachers could not reach their schools, while the entire Bir Ziet University community of 5,000 persons had been prevented from entering the University campus and 371 students had been arrested.

39. The use of collective punishment was outlawed by international law. Even during difficult times, States must continue to safeguard the rule of law. The closure of the West Bank and Gaza Strip not only violated the right to freedom of movement, but also the right to work and the right to education of thousands of innocent civilians.

40. Mrs. GUILLET (International Federation of Human Rights - FIDH) said that FIDH was very concerned about the situation of foreigners and asylum-seekers in Europe. In France, for example, a recent FIDH mission had found that the difficulties facing asylum-seekers constituted serious violations of international refugee law, while appeals procedures against deportation were largely controlled by the administrative authorities themselves. Such practices were unworthy of a State subject to the rule of law. Officially, the Government claimed that it was combating policies advocated by the extreme right and was promoting the integration of foreigners, but in actual fact the various legislative and administrative measures which it had adopted supported xenophobia and turned foreigners into scapegoats for all the social and economic ills of France. FIDH had called for effective respect of the right to seek asylum, of the principle of non-refoulement and of the right to a fair hearing, for protection for Algerian citizens, for respect for international standards in the treatment of detainees, and also for respect for the rights of the defence, for the principle of judicial independence, and for a reconsideration of collective deportations of foreigners and of inhuman bureaucratic practices. FIDH called upon the French authorities and those of all other European States that did not respect their international commitments on the subject to put an end to such serious violations of essential freedoms and basic rights guaranteed by major international and European human rights instruments.

41. Ms. ALI (Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization), speaking on agenda item 20, said that despite the recent rapid expansion of global mass communications, ethnic divisions had actually become more pronounced. While science, technology, communications and trade were seeking to create a global family, cultural and religious factors were giving the concepts of narrow regionalization and ethnocentrism a new lease of life. It was increasingly evident that decades of world stability were threatened by growing demands for the redrawing of national borders and for governance on the basis of race, ethnicity and religion.

42. Attempts to suppress ethnic aspirations could of course be counterproductive; at the same time, the breaking up of multi-ethnic societies was not the answer. What was required was the development of political, social and cultural models that would maintain the integrity of States while giving full scope for the flowering of different cultural and religious

beliefs and ethnic identities. That was the very essence of democracy - the practical application of which by Governments unfortunately left a great deal to be desired.

43. The break-up of States and a redrawing of national boundaries would in fact be the worst possible solution, for it would lead to massive transfers of population of the sort currently seen in the former Yugoslavia. Many of the current conflicts in the Indian subcontinent could be traced back to the partition of British India, where past resentments had evolved, via anger and activism, into terrorism. Where ethnic and religious groups succeeded in carving out a separate entity, they tended to perceive their neighbours as enemies, thereby perpetuating the cycle of suspicion and tension.

44. What was frightening in the case of Pakistan was the hold fundamentalists were beginning to exercise through education, mass mobilization of armed volunteers and the creation of private armies. Though the democratic process denied them a substantial stake in power, their manipulation of religion made devout Muslims fearful of opposing their designs. Those who resisted faced the wrath of their armed minions. The call to jihad was an everyday occurrence; its theatre any progressive or democratic society, including those sectors of its own society that subscribed to a progressive and tolerant ideology.

45. Communities must realize that the world was made up of different races, religions, cultures and ethnic groups, and that progress could be secured only in a climate of tolerance and cooperation. Political structures must thus have the necessary flexibility and maturity to respond to diverse aspirations. Self-governance within the overall structures of composite nationhood, often given the name "internal autonomy", was one way forward. States that could adopt political structures compatible with a heterogeneous society were likely to prove the most peaceful and productive. Democracy had within it the wherewithal to provide such governance; what was needed was for States to understand the meaning of democracy and then to put it into practice.

46. Mr. PANDITA (African Commission of Health and Human Rights Promoters), speaking on agenda item 17, said it was encouraging to note that the Sub-Commission was aware of the new forms of discrimination that had recently surfaced in the Balkans, Rwanda, Burundi, Somalia, the Sudan, and Jammu and Kashmir. Social scientists were still debating the extent to which the resurgence of nationalism, sub-nationalism and ethnic, religious and other identities was a reaction to the process of globalization. It could be argued that assertions of identity were a defence against the negative effects of that process. In many cases, however, that defence mechanism was gradually superseded by the local majority group's aspirations for dominance and power, which often invoked religious factors. Matters were made worse when, in pursuit of their own objectives, external entrepreneurs extended moral and material support to propagation of the concepts of territorial purity and religious and cultural exclusivity.

47. He drew attention to the situation of the Pandit religious minority in Jammu and Kashmir. The national majority within India as a whole constituted a vulnerable numerical minority in the Kashmir region, while the minority group within India constituted a majority in Kashmir. Extremists within the

latter group had embarked on a campaign of ethnic cleansing and other violations of the human rights of Kashmir's religious minority. The exclusion of that minority from the purview of India's Minority Commission was a sad reflection on policy makers. Thanks to the local majority's unbridled aspiration for power and dominance, the Pandit minority had begun to be depicted as an enemy and deprived of any influence in the nation-building process. Protection of the rights of the Pandits was further complicated by the fact that their community was thinly dispersed throughout the Kashmir Valley. A safe zone should be provided in their homeland, in which they could be rehabilitated.

48. Mr. EGUZ (Observer for Turkey), speaking on agenda item 5, said that racism was the worst social and political scourge of modern times. His delegation thus welcomed the efforts made within the United Nations human rights system to secure its eradication. Unfortunately those efforts had not been translated into effective action, as could be seen from the fact that the United Nations had had to declare a Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination in view of the disappointing results yielded by the first two Decades. The need to combat racism was assuming ever greater urgency. His delegation therefore welcomed the proposals contained in Mr. Eide's working paper (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1996/30). As was pointed out in paragraph 20 of that document, the main factor in racial discrimination continued to be skin colour. However, mechanisms must be developed to detect the subtler forms racism was assuming, for instance in the labour market, or under the guise of "cultural relativism".

49. Instances of racism reported in the media were only the tip of the iceberg, for such incidents were usually not reported by the public. More alarmingly, public opinion was becoming inured to reports of instances of racially motivated arson or desecration of cemeteries, which in any case were no longer regarded as newsworthy.

50. Racism must be fought on two fronts. First, ways and means must be found to eradicate existing racism and assist its victims; second, the environment in which racism flourished must be eliminated, so that future generations could be freed from the fear of racist attacks. Stricter legislation was called for, together with harsher disciplinary measures against government agents found to be involved in racist activities. The idea of establishing a voluntary fund to assist and rehabilitate victims of racism also merited consideration. But the most effective weapon was education: information about the evils of racism must be incorporated in schools' curricula and in professional training, particularly in the case of personnel (such as law enforcement and customs officials) who frequently encountered foreigners in the discharge of their duties.

51. Every country had something to contribute to the fight against racism - not only those that were trying to eliminate it from their societies, but also those, like Turkey, that were concerned at the plight of their own citizens abroad. The United Nations should thus take the lead in bringing together all the relevant actors. Besides ensuring that adequate resources were made available to the Special Rapporteur, it could best contribute by organizing national and regional events, and, above all, by convening a world conference on racism, to be followed by technical meetings. It was to be hoped that such

a conference could be held before the turn of the century. Meanwhile, the Sub-Commission must build on its own past initiatives in the field of combating racism. Mr. Eide's working paper was a harbinger of future fruitful contributions in that regard.

52. Ms. DUDA (Observer for Poland), speaking on agenda item 5, said she wished to foster optimism by citing an example of a problem involving minorities that had been successfully solved despite initial public reluctance and attempts to politicize it. Her story should be considered against the background of the violence that had traditionally characterized relations between the Polish and Ukrainian communities down the ages.

53. An elementary school had recently been built in an area of Poland inhabited by a large Ukrainian minority. As the building neared completion, the authorities had realized that the school would be too large for the Polish community, and too costly for it to maintain. Meanwhile, the local Ukrainian community had been looking for new premises for its own secondary school. Initial talks between the two communities had culminated in an agreement that they would share the new school premises. However, historical prejudices had soon been revived by fears of recrimination regarding the ownership of the school premises. After many months of negotiations under the auspices of the Polish Parliamentary Commission on Minorities it had finally been agreed that the new school would open its doors to both communities at the start of the 1996/97 school year. It was to be hoped that the ghosts of the past had thus finally been exorcized.

54. The CHAIRMAN said it was heartening to hear, for once, an account of a positive experience. No doubt real life afforded many examples of such experiences. Alas, all too few of them were brought to the attention of the Sub-Commission.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.